

more worthy mode of life. In i Cor. vii. 32-34 he argues that the unmarried, being free from domestic cares, can care for the things of God. He speaks often of the degree of certainty he feels that he has with him the Spirit of God. This shows that he often lacked self-confidence in regard to his teachings. He does not seem to hold the ascetic view. In Ephes. v. 22 the marriage institution is accepted and regulated, with some mystical notions, which it is impossible to understand. Marriage and Christ's headship of the church are said to explain each other or to be parallel, but it is not possible to understand which of them is represented as simple and obvious, so that it explains the other. The apostle sometimes seems to lay stress on the vexations and cares of wedlock. If that is his motive, he announces no principle or religious rule, but only a consideration of expediency which is not on a high plane. Tertullian and Jerome (in anticipation of the end of the world) regarded virginity as an end in itself; that is to say, that they thought it noble and pious to renounce the function on which the perpetuation of the species depends. The race (having left out of account the end of the world) cannot commit suicide, and men and women cannot willfully antagonize the mores of existence — economic, social, intellectual, and moral, as well as physical — which are imposed on them by the fact that the human race consists of two complementary sexes. Jerome, in his tracts against Jovinianus, wanders around the absurdities of this contradiction. The ascetic side of it became the cardinal idea of religious virtue in the Middle Ages. "Monkish asceticism saw woman only in the distorting mirror of desire suppressed by torture."<sup>1</sup> "Woman" became a

phantasm. She was  
imaginary. She appeared base, sensual, and  
infinitely enchanting,  
drawing men down to hell; yet worth it. In truth,  
there never  
has been any such creature. In the replies of  
Gregory to Augustine (601 A.D.)<sup>2</sup> arbitrary rules about marriage and  
sex are laid  
down with great elaboration. They are prurient  
and obscene.  
The mediaeval sophistry about the birth of Christ is  
the utmost  
product of human folly in its way. Joseph and Mary  
were mar-  
ried, but the marriage was never consummated.  
Yet it was a

<sup>1</sup> Lippert, *Kulturgesch* II, 520.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia* 20.